

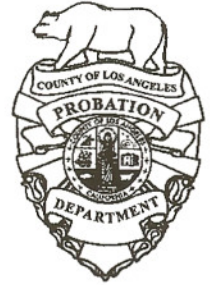


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## COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES PROBATION DEPARTMENT

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February 19, 2008

TO: Each Supervisor  
FROM:   
Robert B. Taylor  
Chief Probation Officer

SUBJECT: **DEVELOPMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION REFORM PLAN  
FOR JUVENILE HALLS & CAMPS – FOURTH PROGRESS REPORT**

Pursuant to your Board's June 19, 2007 instruction, this is our fourth 60-day progress report covering mid-December 2007 through mid-February 2008, regarding the development of a comprehensive plan to dramatically reform education programs in the County's juvenile halls and probation camps.

We continue to work on this endeavor with the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools and representatives from the various departments and agencies identified by your Board as well as additional key stakeholders from other departments or agencies that we deemed appropriate and that expressed an interest in this effort.

This report provides an overview of the work, presentations, and site visits conducted as part of our various Education Reform Committee meetings held during this period. In addition, a preview of our vision and draft recommendations is also provided.

### **PROGRESS STATUS OVERVIEW**

During this reporting period, I chaired three Committee meetings, for a total of 12 Committee meetings held thus far. These Committee meetings continue to create constructive, open discussions regarding ways to improve the educational services that we provide to the minors in our juvenile camps and halls.

In addition, I have provided presentations to the various key stakeholders identified further below. Overall, the draft report has been well-received by numerous stakeholders who support the implementation of the Committee's recommendations that we believe are necessary to effectively engage probation youth in education and to improve their opportunities for becoming successful and fully reintegrated into our communities.

### **10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> COMMITTEE MEETING HIGHLIGHTS**

On January 10 and 24, and February 11, we held our 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> Committee meetings, respectively, to primarily discuss three draft versions of the report including the proposed recommendations as well as the development of our draft implementation action plan. I also provided an overview of the draft report and proposed recommendations to various key stakeholders to acquire their feedback and to ensure a collaborative endeavor prior to the submission of the report to your Board in April 2008.

In our last report, we indicated that a LACOE representative presented the Committee with a report reflecting LACOE's reaction to the Children's Planning Council's June 12, 2007 report and your Board's education reform action of June 19, 2007, in recognition of what is currently occurring, and recommendations for consideration by the Committee, which included the following two immediate next steps. The following also provides a corresponding update:

1. Conduct a student evaluation study to assess the efficacy of the current comprehensive high school education model on student achievement.

Status: LACOE anticipates the evaluation report to be ready by mid-April 2008.

2. Hire a consultant to review successful evidence-based practices used in other states with similar student populations in order to determine the merits of utilizing similar strategies in Los Angeles County.

Status: LACOE is conducting a comprehensive literature review that will focus on identifying educational programs and delivery models used by successful juvenile court school programs, particularly those in large metropolitan areas. Given, the fact that LACOE's focus is to provide students with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed on the California High School Exit Examination and graduate from high school, LACOE also wants to look at other educational delivery models used by cutting edge probation systems.

### **ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL TOURS**

On January 30<sup>th</sup>, I visited several vocational education programs operating within the Bellflower Unified School District. I had the opportunity to see a technology-based program designed by Paxton/Patterson, a company well known for its work in the vocational education field. The specific program chosen by Bellflower Unified offers eight 20-day modules in which students not only learn the history of the field and its relevance to the world of work, but also have an opportunity to obtain some hands-on work-related experience in each module. Some of the modules we observed were transportation, manufacturing, aviation, and robotics.



While in Bellflower Unified, I also visited The Digital Art Academy where students are provided with a series of experiences over four years that include drawing, painting, sculpture, and computer animation, which prepare them for careers or college admittance in the field of art. Each student leaves the program with a professional level portfolio to use in applying for college or work experiences.

Finally, I visited the Automotive Repair Program. In addition to the classroom experiences, the program provides a full hands-on experience for students, including opportunities to work on cars in four auto bays. The program is partnered with a more advanced automotive program at nearby Cerritos Community College.

In each of these programs I saw students engaged in a meaningful way with the learning opportunities. Their engagement and understanding of the relevance of their experiences to the real world of work was impressive and seemed to serve as a deterrent to off-task behaviors.

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, I visited the New Village Charter High School for girls located adjacent to Saint Anne's Home for Girls in Los Angeles. The school's population is comprised mostly of foster and probation youth, many of whom are pregnant or parenting. A complete intake assessment is done on each student to identify educational and support needs. The instructional environment is engaging and student centered, and the academic program includes high expectations and is relevant to the real world through a variety of vocationally based programs including newspaper production, modeling, dance, and fashion design. The success stories related to these girls and their transition back to the community are impressive.

#### **PROBATION'S STRATEGIC PLAN – FINAL EDUCATION-RELATED OUTCOMES**

The Probation Department's primary goal is to increase public safety through reduced recidivism and to effect positive behavioral change among probationers. Inherent in this is the belief that all minors have the right to obtain a quality education, and that it is essential to improve educational standards and outcomes for probation youth, so that they are fully equipped to perform capably whether they leave camp to finish high school, go on to college, or join the workforce, with a goal of becoming productive members of society.

The Department is updating its strategic plan, anticipated for completion in May 2008, and has established the following four education-related outcomes for inclusion in the Department's dashboard reporting system:

- Number and percentage of eligible juveniles that complete high school diploma by completion of probation;
- Number and percentage of eligible juveniles that obtain their G.E.D. by completion of probation;



- Number and percentage of eligible juveniles that successfully enroll in a vocational education program by completion of probation; and
- Number and percentage of eligible juveniles that successfully enroll in a two- or four-year college by completion of probation.

We have reviewed various materials that summarize numerous studies which show that ***recidivism decreases when education increases***. Attached for your reference is a February 12, 2008 Legislative Analyst's Office report entitled "*From Cellblocks to Classrooms: Reforming Inmate Education to Improve Public Safety*", as well as a related February 13, 2008 Sacramento Bee-related article.

### **PREVIEW OF VISION, SOME KEY ISSUES & DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS**

Many probationers have been neglected for years, are educationally disadvantaged, and approximately one-third of our detained youth have some type of specific learning disability and/or other special education need(s). The following provides a preview of the Committee's vision for education reform and draft recommendations. The Committee's vision includes:

- An instructional program that is not only accredited but includes high expectations, educational standards and outcomes for all students so that youth are well equipped to succeed in school or in work life, with a focus on four specific alternative educational pathways.
- The delivery of educational services to youth in the County's juvenile halls and camps based on (1) comprehensive assessments of their criminogenic, educational, health, and mental health needs; and (2) a case plan – including an individual learning plan (ILP) for educational services – that is customized to address each student's strengths, needs, and responsivity issues, with seamless case management.
- The provision of adequate special education in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act that includes timely assessments of special education needs and development of Individualized Education Plans.
- A quality educational system within the juvenile halls and camps that is not just limited to four or five hours of classroom time per weekday. Rather, education needs to be part of each youth's case plan that is the "whole cloth" for improving their respective development during and after their stays in juvenile halls and/or camps – we believe all minors have a right to having the opportunity to obtain a quality, lifelong education.

The key educational reform issues pertain to governance, assessments and case planning, instructional programs and delivery, special education, number of regular teachers, classrooms and equipment, and educational funding. The draft



recommendations fall into the following categories:

- **Educational governance:** Establishing a single point of responsibility and accountability for all aspects of the educational system in the juvenile halls and camps. This may be accomplished through renegotiation of the Memorandum of Agreement between LACOE and Probation or can also be accomplished through a regulatory waiver or special legislation, if necessary. For clarification, the Probation Department is not interested in a takeover of services provided by LACOE but to establish a single point of responsibility and accountability for providing education services to minors under the Department's legal care and custody and eventually becoming the single point of responsibility and accountability for all services provided to these minors, including health and mental health services.
- **Educational responsibilities:** Clarifying the responsibilities of parents and other caregivers, the Juvenile Court, Probation, and educational service providers in the education of youth in the juvenile halls and camps. Ensuring parent or caregiver involvement throughout the process of each youth's adjudication, school enrollment, assessment, detainment, and release, because such involvement is critical in ensuring the healthy development of youth. Educating and training parents and other caregivers about the juvenile justice system, the legal and educational rights of their children, and their involvement in the assessment, case planning, and transitional planning processes to better enable them to carry out their educational responsibilities for their children.
- **Educational assessments and case planning:** Implementing identified changes in assessments, integrated case planning, outcome reporting, and academic records management systems and processes. Establishing ways and means to ensure effective collaboration among Probation, other County departments, LACOE, and other educational service providers in these areas.
- **Instructional programs and delivery:** Redesigning instructional programs to provide the alternative educational pathways identified in the Comprehensive Educational Reform Report. Piloting several new instructional delivery models in the juvenile halls and camps as well as in the community:
  - Establishing a charter school for high school girls and another for high school boys.
  - Partnering with neighborhood public schools to create a place for youth returning from juvenile halls or camps to continue in a compatible instructional environment.
  - Partnering with community-based organizations to utilize one-stop centers for career technical education in conjunction with academic and pre-apprenticeship programs in camps and apprenticeships and/or jobs in the community.



- **Special education:** Providing a full continuum of placements and services (including resource specialists, special day classes, and home hospitals) required under State law, regardless of whether or not these youth attended public schools before they were detained, were ordered to camp, or were released into the community. In some cases, the nature or costs of required special education services may be prohibitive in the juvenile halls and camps, and this may mean that affected youth should not be detained in juvenile hall or ordered to camp.
- **Programming for during/after school hours and weekends:** Restructuring camp and classroom schedules, so there is more time for (a) individual program treatment; (b) homework, tutoring, and educational enrichment; and (c) other activities (aligned with youths' individual case plans) before or after class.
- **Educational facilities, classroom space, staffing and funding:** Providing classrooms that are of adequate size, safe, clean, well maintained, free of graffiti, and surrounded by attractive grounds, so that youth have an appropriate space in which to learn. Ensuring that there is an adequate number of teaching, special education, psychological, and counseling staff to meet the needs of the students in small classroom settings in which youth can be provided the degree of personalized attention required by their case plans. Training of all educational service provider staff in EBP principles and staff skills and that they be held accountable for student learning through a periodic evaluation process that is tied to probation outcomes and performance indicators approved by the Board of Supervisors. Supporting LACOE's proposed legislation to revamp the current JJCS funding model, which is based on ADA, to one that (a) is based on a residential service delivery model, (b) reflects the costs to attract quality teachers to work in the remote locations of the juvenile halls and camps throughout the County, and (c) fully funds education services, primarily special education, that students are legally entitled to receive.
- **Quality assurance and program evaluation:** Establishing a quality assurance (QA) process/system that emphasizes true learning and achievement of Probation's educational outcomes rather than a singular focus on test scores and graduation rates. Holding all educational service providers accountable for learning development by youth in juvenile halls and camps through consistent use of evaluation processes and reporting of key performance indicators via the Dashboard Reporting System being established by the Probation Department.

If fully implemented, the recommendations will enable youth, and emerging adults (18-25 year olds) with opportunities to:

- Receive comprehensive assessments of their criminogenic, educational, health, and mental health needs.



- Receive case plans including individual learning plans (ILPs) or Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for educational services that are customized to address their needs, strengths, and responsivity issues.
- Have access to, and counseling about, one or more of the following four educational pathways, based on their strengths, interests, abilities, motivation, and achievement levels:
  - Obtaining a high school diploma and passing the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE);
  - Obtaining a General Education Development (GED) certificate;
  - Completing career technical education (CTE) programs in preparation for formal apprenticeships and/or employment; and/or
  - Having opportunities to attend two- or four-year colleges.

All four of the above educational pathways are intended to provide avenues for youth and emerging adults to acquire the education needed to obtain gainful employment and to become productive members of their communities.

- Benefit from the County's continuing and expanded commitment to improving the literacy of both juvenile and emerging adult probationers.
- Have timely access to special education assessments and a full continuum of services and placements to address the learning disabilities and special education needs (identified in IEPs) that seem to be quite prevalent among these youth and emerging adults.
- Have access to quality classrooms, educational materials, computer equipment, and other technologies that involve interactive learning by doing (Learning Style 3) as well as more traditional classroom instruction (Learning Style 2) that emphasizes lecture, reading assignments, other homework, and testing.
- Have access to quality CTE and vocational education programs that prepare youth and emerging adults for formal apprenticeships and/or employment in the construction trades, media production, culinary arts, etc., to earn a living to support themselves and their families.
- Have access to both classroom and after-school tutors and mentors that provide these youth and emerging adults with nurturing support that many have been missing for all or most of their young lives.
- Receive updated case plans and integrated transition services to help these youth and emerging adults move from juvenile halls and camps back to their families and communities.

### **OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATIONS TO KEY STAKEHOLDERS & THEIR INPUT**

As indicated below, during the preparation of the draft versions of the report, presentations to various key stakeholders began in January 2008, to enable acquiring their input prior to our anticipated submission of the report to your Board in April 2008.

- On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, I presented the key issues and recommendations in our draft report to the Children's Planning Council. At the same meeting, the CPC's ad hoc group of representatives from County agencies and educational service providers also provide additional information in support of the recommendations.
- On January 31<sup>st</sup>, I met with the Education Coordinating Council to discuss the key issues and recommendations in the draft report. After a lengthy discussion, the ECC voted in support of the recommendations.
- On February 12<sup>th</sup>, I presented the key issues and recommendations in our draft report to the Los Angeles County Board of Education. Although Board members indicated strong support for a number of the report recommendations, they generally expressed strong opposition to any changes in governance of educational services in our juvenile halls and camps.
- On February 13<sup>th</sup>, I met with the Probation Commission to discuss the key issues and recommendations in the draft report. Commission members will be reviewing the fourth draft of the report, to be released this week, and indicated their desire to vote on the recommendations at the February 27<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Some representatives from your offices also attended some of these presentations. Overall, the draft report has been well-received by numerous stakeholders who support the implementation of the Committee's recommendations.

In addition, as you may be aware, we will be having our Second Annual Community Corrections Collaborative Conference on March 17, 2008, where we will be sharing our proposed educational reform strategies with our juvenile justice partners. To ensure a collaborative endeavor, we will be providing an opportunity for our partners to provide us any input regarding the draft report. As such, we are planning to provide your Board with a final report including recommendations and a short-term, partial implementation action plan in April 2008.



Please contact me if you have any questions or require additional information, or you staff may contact David M. Davies, Chief Deputy, Probation at (562) 940-2511.

RBT:dn

Attachments (2)

c: Michael Nash, Presiding Judge, Juvenile Court  
William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer  
Doyle Campbell, Deputy Chief Executive Officer  
Sachi A. Hamai, Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors  
Raymond G. Fortner, Jr., County Counsel  
Dr. Darline P. Robles, Superintendent, Los Angeles County Office of Education  
Rudell S. Freer, President, Los Angeles County Board of Education  
Clay Hollopeter, President, Probation Commission  
Margaret Todd, County Librarian  
Dr. Marvin J. Southard, Director, Department of Mental Health  
Cheryl Mendoza, Executive Director, Children's Planning Council  
Jose Huizar, Chair, Los Angeles County Education Coordinating Council  
Trish Ploehn, Director, Department of Children and Family Services  
Nikki C. Friedman, Chair, Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury  
Education & Justice Deputies  
Judy Hammond, Public Information Officer